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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FUND FOR REFUGEES SUPPORTS SCHOOL
REHABILITATION

¶1. (U) The Ambassador signed a USD 20,000 grant from the Ambassador's Fund for Refugees at a special reception August 7 for Action and Interventions for Development and Social Supervision (AIDES), an NGO which will rehabilitate a secondary school in Buburu, Equateur Province. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) presented a slide show of schools in the area and explained how the grantee will use the funds to improve the learning and teaching environment in Buburu. Most schools in that region of province are makeshift structures lacking basic educational materials.

¶2. (U) In his remarks, the Ambassador emphasized the USG's continued commitment to refugees. He noted this was the third successive year Embassy Kinshasa had funded projects through the Ambassador's Fund for Refugees and first time it had supported a project in Equateur. The Ambassador noted it will benefit approximately 3,000 children between the ages of 13 and 20 by the end of the year. Speaking on behalf of the UNHCR, Africa Bureau Director Marjon Kamara thanked the Ambassador for his continued support of refugees in the DRC.

¶3. (U) The ceremony was well attended. Numerous senior officials including Geneva-based Kamara and the president of UNHCR's Executive Committee, Love Mtesa, were present. Equateur's Provincial Assembly President and Minister of Economics and Finance also attended, along with several members of the media.

¶4. (U) The event received positive media attention and was reported in at least three other major newspapers and six television news programs. L'Avenir, a pro-Kabila Kinshasa daily, called the grant "an example of an activity which must be encouraged as it will allow refugees to return to the region and begin a new life, making education accessible to Congolese children."

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